

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
The Liverpool Digital Site, Edge Lane,  
Liverpool, Merseyside.  
NGR SJ 3800 9050 (centred).**

Liverpool Museum Accession Number LIV.2005.13

*Report for Scott Wilson Ltd*

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## **Non-Technical Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Liverpool Museum Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Scott Wilson at the Liverpool Digital site, Edge Lane, Liverpool. The project consisted of the monitoring of the removal of overburden prior to redevelopment of the site and aimed to locate remains associated with Edge Lane Hall, a building shown on historic mapping of the area.

Most of the deposits found related to the later use of the site as a depot and included surfaces paved with setts and incorporating tramlines. The only features which may have related to the Hall was a small stone lined pit and short sections of stone wall, both of which probably belonged to associated out-buildings.

# **An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Liverpool Digital Site, Edge Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside. NGR SJ 3800 9050 (centred).**

## **1. Background**

This report relates to an archaeological watching brief on an area of land at the former MTL and Littlewoods sites, Edge Lane, Liverpool. The investigation was undertaken in accordance with an archaeological condition on outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the site (Ref: 04F/2444).

The project was undertaken on behalf of Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick & Co Ltd in accordance with a project brief produced by the client in consultation with the Merseyside Archaeological Officer (Macnab 2004b).

## **2. Site Location and Description**

The proposed development area is centred on SJ 3800 9050 to the east of Liverpool City centre in Merseyside (Fig. 1). The site covers approximately 45.6 hectares and is situated to the south of Edge Lane and to the north of the Liverpool to Manchester railway line. The western boundary is flanked by Wavertree Park and Botanic Gardens, whilst the eastern boundary is formed by a series of roads (Milton Road, Dryden Road, Pighue Lane and Rathbone Road). The MTL part of the site (a part of which is subject to the archaeological planning condition within the current scheme of works) is situated in the northwest corner of the development area, with the Littlewoods site to the west and the Marconi site to the east. Wavertree Technology Park also lies to the south.

The area covered by the watching brief consisted of a rectangle of land in the very north-west corner of the Liverpool Digital development site, bounded by the Edge Lane boundary to the north, the boundary with Littlewoods site to the west, and marked by arbitrary lines within the overall development site to south and east.

The underlying geology of the site comprises of Triassic sandstone bedrock. This is overlain by glacial clay, of variable thickness, with occasional bands and pockets of sands and gravels (Macnab 2004a, 4). The soil type was not determined.

## **3. Previous Work**

No archaeological fieldwork had been conducted on the site prior to the commencement of this project. The site was initially identified as an area of archaeological potential from information held on the Merseyside Sites and Monuments Record (MSMR). A desk-based assessment (Macnab 2004a) suggested that significant archaeological remains were only likely to be present within a confined area in the northwest corner of the development area, within the MTL and Littlewoods sites. Only the MTL site was to be affected by this archaeological watching brief as the Littlewoods Buildings are proposed for reuse.

The desk-based assessment (Macnab 2004a, 11-17) suggested that the remains of foundations, cellars and an underground passageway associated with a late 16th century building, known as Edge Lane Hall, may have survived within the watching brief area. The majority of the site appears to have been mainly agricultural and parkland until the arrival of the railways in the mid 19th century. Following this, the area became increasingly industrialised until the early 1950's when the entire area was covered with factories, a large bus depot, housing and railway sidings. Other than the area covered by this project, most of the development site has been heavily disturbed by the insertion of railway sidings in the 1880s and 1890s, clay extraction pits associated with a late 19th

century brickworks and the construction, use, demolition and clearance of modern factory buildings and associated services across the development area.

#### **4. Methodology**

Full details of the project aims and methodology are given in the project design (Macnab 2004b). The project consisted of the monitoring by the authors of the excavation of test-pits using a 21 tonne tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1 m toothed bucket on 11 February 2005. Where possible, excavation was undertaken in level spits to the upper surface of undisturbed glacial drift (Boulder Clay/till). Removal of overburden using a 21 tonne tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 2 m toothed bucket was subsequently monitored by Dr. R. A. Philpott on 8 February 2005. A final site visit was made by the author on 21 February 2005.

#### **5. Results of the Watching Brief**

Four test-pits were excavated in the north-west corner of the site (Nos 19, 33, 47, 48; Fig. 2). Each test-pit was c. 1m across and 2-3 m long. TP 47 was excavated through c. 0.4 m of topsoil, containing modern plastic, to undisturbed Boulder Clay. In TP48 a concrete slab c. 0.3 m thick was removed to undisturbed Boulder Clay. The excavation of TP19 was terminated following the removal of c. 0.2 m of topsoil when a brick lined shaft which measured at least c. 5 m deep and c. 1m square was encountered. Although it was not possible to make a close inspection of the brickwork, its general nature suggests a date in the early-mid 20th century and it was presumably a manhole or similar access of no archaeological significance. TP33 was excavated through 0.1 m of tarmac over a 0.12 m thick layer of sandstone setts representing the road surface to the MTL depot formerly occupying the site. This overlay a 0.6 m deep layer of sandstone rubble within concrete, presumably make-up for the road. A fenced off void c. 5 m to the south of TP48 suggests that extensive modern basements were present to its south.

These test-pits suggested that the area around the former location of Edge Lane Hall had been extensively truncated to undisturbed glacial till deposits. The topography of the site suggested that a slight terrace had been cut from the south over the Hall's location, though it was not possible to establish the likely depth of the cut for this. The test-pits were both limited in extent and widely distributed across the Halls' location and it was conceivable that the footprint of some or all of the structure or its associated outbuildings lay in-between. Although it was unlikely that significant deposits relating to the Hall survived, it remained possible that localised deposits were present, in particular relating to the 'very large cellars' referred to by Hoult.

Consequently the watching brief was continued during the removal of overburden which consisted of a combination of tarmac and soil. A 21-tonne tracked excavator removed an area of topsoil along the western site boundary. The soil deposit proved to consist of very recently dumped material with plastic bottles and other detritus in a humic matrix. The removal of this humic layer showed it had been laid directly onto a truncated Boulder Clay surface. Subsequently the excavator began to remove the tarmac surface of the road in the NW corner of the site. In part this tarmac had been laid directly onto the same truncated Boulder Clay surface, though the majority of the tarmac was laid onto an earlier road surface of stone setts. The removal of tarmac into the north-west corner of the site produced the heavily truncated remains of one archaeological feature, a stone built pit, set into the Boulder clay (Fig. 2).

The sandstone blocks of the walls lining the pit were of Permo-Triassic 'Red' sandstone, up to 30 cm long, set in a pale creamy buff mortar, and set directly against the Boulder Clay natural subsoil. The pit measured 1.22 m north-south, internally, and 1.90 m externally, and a minimum of 1.07 m east-west, though the western edge remained buried under the narrow margin of tarmac on the edge of the site. The walls varied between 0.23 m wide on the eastern side, to 0.42 m wide on the south side. The interior had been very carefully lined with a 2 cm thick lining of pinkish brown plaster.

The interior of the pit was filled with a yellowish grey coarse sand (2), in which a few flecks of blue paint, a few small fragments of broken grey Welsh slate, and a few fragments of broken brick and mortar were found. A narrow section was cut through this fill to the base of the pit. A single tiny sherd of 19th century blue transfer-printed ware was found in this deposit, along with a small fragment of glass from a 19th century beer bottle<sup>1</sup>. Under the sand (2), a mid grey silty sand deposit (3) was encountered which contained no finds. This rested immediately on the neatly finished level sandstone base of the pit. The base of the tank or pit was reached at 0.18 m below the surviving top of the feature, at 0.48 m below the tarmac road surface.

The tarmac road surface had been laid over an earlier road surface of stone setts, in which were laid tram or railway lines. The stone setts were set in bitumen, and laid on a concrete base. The surface level of the setts was approximately the same as the exposed Boulder Clay after removal of the modern dumped topsoil.

Outside the designated area of the watching brief, two stone concentrations were noted in the scarp edge along the northern margin of the site. One may have been the truncated remains of a sandstone wall but was not clearly visible. The other was certainly a wall foundation. The reduction of the ground surface within the site had cut through the wall, leaving a section exposed in the face, about 1m south of the current fence and wall line along Edge Lane. Too little was visible to determine with certainty the direction of the wall, or its stratigraphic relationships. However, it consisted of Permo-Triassic sandstone blocks, unmortared, measuring up to 0.30 m long, and could be seen to be sealed by a humic topsoil containing much 19th century pottery (Plates 1 & 2). Their approximate position appears to relate to outbuildings to the east of Edge Lane Hall shown on the First Edition OS 6 inch map of 1890 (Macnab 2004a, Figure 6).

## **6. Conclusions**

In general, little of archaeological significance appears to survive within the area covered by the watching brief.

The function of the plaster-lined pit is uncertain. It may have served as an outside privy, a function consistent with its small size and lining which would make it easy to clean out. It could also have been a cold store, or water tank. Examination of the 1890 and 1908 OS maps shows a small projection on the eastern side of Edge Lane Hall, which is the only part of the house that possibly intrudes on the development site. If so, it is possible that the pit forms the lowest surviving element of the hall structure, preserved due to its depth, after the removal of overlying structures in a substantial clearance operation.

The implications of the find are that any superstructure for the pit or tank had been entirely removed. The potential for the survival of structures related to Edge Lane Hall must now be considered low.

## **Bibliography**

Macnab, N., 2004a *Liverpool Digital, Liverpool, Cultural Heritage Desk-based Assessment*. Scott Wilson Report, June 2004

Macnab N. 2004b *Liverpool Digital, Liverpool. Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief. Prepared for Liverpool Land Development Company*. Scott Wilson, December 2004.

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<sup>1</sup> These finds were not retained as part of the archive.

## Figures

*Figure 1. Site location.*

S:\84 Liverpool Digital final archive\84 Text\84 Liverpool Digital watching brief Final.doc  
LIV.2005.13



*Figure 2. Test-pit locations and location of stone lined pit. Scale 1:500.*

## Plates



*Plate 1. Stone lined pit from the south. Scale 0.5 m.*



*Plate 2. Stone lined pit from the south-west. Scale 0.5 m.*

## Appendix A: Archive Catalogue

### Paper Archive

LMFAU=Liverpool Museum Field Archaeology Unit

Author & Date	Title	Description
Macnab Neil (Scott Wilson) June 2004	Liverpool Digital, Liverpool. Cultural Heritage Desk-Based Assessment	Initial desk study of site produced for Liverpool Land Development Company.
Macnab Neil (Scott Wilson) December 2004	Liverpool Digital, Liverpool. Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief	Specification and brief for this project produced for Liverpool Land Development Company.
Adams, Mark (LMFAU) January 2005	Risk Assessment for Liverpool Digital Watching Brief	Risk Assessment based upon Liverpool Museum Field Archaeology Unit's Generic risk assessment for watching briefs.
Fugro 2004	None available	Copies of borehole logs from client extracted from geotechnical report.
Adams, Mark & Philpott, Robert (LMFAU)	None	Copies of field notes.
Scott Wilson November 2003	Liverpool Digital Proposed Exploratory Hole Plan	A3 drawing of site showing proposed trial pit locations
Scott Wilson?	None Available	A4 photocopy extracted from site plan by contractor showing location of trial pits.
Adams, Mark; Philpott, Robert (LMFAU); Macnab Neil (Scott Wilson) & Jones, Robert	None	Print-outs of email correspondence primarily concerned with initiating this project.
Adams Mark (LMFAU) May 2005	An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Liverpool Digital Site, Edge Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside. NGR SJ 3800 9050 (centred).	This document.

### Digital Archive

#### Text Files

All text WORD6 files are also saved as txt files

Directory	File Name	Description	Original File Type
84 Liverpool Digital Text	84 Liverpool digital robs draft	Draft site report by RA Philpott based upon RAP's notes	WORD6
84 Liverpool Digital Text	wb spec draft2	Draft copy of 'Liverpool Digital, Liverpool. Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief' as	WORD6



		received from Scott Wilson	
84 Liverpool Digital Text	wb spec final	Copy of 'Liverpool Digital, Liverpool. Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief' as received from Scott Wilson	WORD6
84 Liverpool Digital Text	wbspec cover	Cover to 'Liverpool Digital, Liverpool. Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief' as received from Scott Wilson	WORD6
84 Liverpool Digital Text	84 Liverpool Digital watching brief Final	This document.	WORD6
84 Liverpool Digital Text	D101154-WB-02 WATCHING BRIEF 211204	Location of Watching Brief from Scott Wilson	PDF
84 Liverpool Digital Text	D101154-AR-01 Location	Site Location from Scott Wilson	
84 Liverpool Digital Text	CLR7.Stats.REMEDIAL.TARGETS.Plot 1.27.01.05 rev a	Ground contamination data from Scott Wilson	PDF

### Databases

Directory	File Name	Description
84 Liverpool Digital Databases	84 Liverpool Digital Photographic Catalogue	Catalogue of photographs saved as ACCESS and dbIII formats

### Drawings

AutoCAD drawings are saved in dwg and dxf formats

Directory	File Name	Description
84 Liverpool Digital Drawings/WB Fig 1.	WB fig	Map from Scott Wilson showing Watching Brief Location. Used as Fig. 1 in 84 Liverpool Digital watching brief Final
	WB LMFAU fig 2	Plan based upon WB fig showing location of features. Used as Fig. 2 in Liverpool Digital watching brief Final
	X OS Base	OS Base map used in WB fig & WB LMFAU fig 2

**Images**

Digital copies of photographs are held in subdirectory '84 Liverpool Digital digital photographs' taken with a Nikon Coolpix 995 digital camera. The catalogue below is based upon the ACCESS database '84 Liverpool Digital Photographic Catalogue'.

CAT	VIEW	FILM	NEG	SITE	AREA	CTXT	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DIR	NOTES	TAKEN BY
1	0	Digital		84	TP47		11/01/2005	Side of trench showing topsoil over Boulder Clay	N		M. Adams
2	0	Digital		84	TP47		11/01/2005	View of work in progress	N		M. Adams
3	0	Digital		84	TP48		11/01/2005	Trench being opened by wheeled excavator	S		M. Adams
4	0	Digital		84	TP48		11/01/2005	Side of trench showing concrete slab over Boulder Clay	N		M. Adams
5	0	Digital		84	TP48		11/01/2005	View of trench	W		M. Adams
6	0	Digital		84	TP19		11/01/2005	View of trench showing manhole	N		M. Adams
7	0	Digital		84	TP19		11/01/2005	View of trench showing manhole	N		M. Adams
8	0	Digital		84	TP19		11/01/2005	View of trench showing manhole	N		M. Adams
9	0	Digital		84	TP33		11/01/2005	View of trench showing setts under concrete	W		M. Adams
10	0	Digital		84	TP33		11/01/2005	Trench from south	S		M. Adams
11	0	Digital		84			11/01/2005	View of area covered by watching brief	E		M. Adams
12	0	Digital		84	TP33		11/01/2005	View of trench showing setts under concrete	W		M. Adams
13	0	Digital		84	TP33		11/01/2005	View of trench showing setts under concrete	W		M. Adams
14	0	Digital		84			11/01/2005	View looking east from area covered by watching brief	W		M. Adams
15	0	Digital		84			11/01/2005	View looking south-east from area covered by watching brief	NW		M. Adams
16	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-West corner of site	SW		R. Philpott
17	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-West corner of site	SE		R. Philpott
18	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-West corner of site	SW		R. Philpott
19	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Inscription on railway track			R. Philpott
20	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Redeposited clay on northern boundary with Edge Lane	S		R. Philpott
21	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-West corner of site, tarmac over hardcore	WSW		R. Philpott

*Liverpool Digital. Watching Brief. Final Report.*

CAT	VIEW	FILM	NEG	SITE	AREA	CTXT	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DIR	NOTES	TAKEN BY
22	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Stones on northern boundary with Edge Lane	S		R. Philpott
23	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Wall on North Boundary with Edge Lane	S		R. Philpott
24	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Deposits on western boundary of site	E		R. Philpott
25	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Detail of deposits on western boundary of site	E		R. Philpott
26	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Excavation of deposits on western boundary of site	SE		R. Philpott
27	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	View of watching brief area from East	E		R. Philpott
28	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Top of stone lined feature as initially exposed	S		R. Philpott
29	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Top of stone lined feature as initially exposed	S		R. Philpott
30	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Top of stone lined feature as initially exposed	S		R. Philpott
31	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Top of stone lined feature as initially exposed	S		R. Philpott
32	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Top of stone lined feature as initially exposed	E		R. Philpott
33	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Top of stone lined feature as initially exposed	N		R. Philpott
34	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North facing section through sandy fill of stone lined pit	N		R. Philpott
35	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North facing section through sandy fill of stone lined pit	N		R. Philpott
36	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	South facing section through sandy fill of stone lined pit	S		R. Philpott
37	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	South facing section through sandy fill of stone lined pit	S		R. Philpott
38	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	South facing section through sandy fill of stone lined pit	S		R. Philpott
39	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	South facing section through sandy fill of stone lined pit	SE		R. Philpott
40	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Boulder Clay Surface	N		R. Philpott
41	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Boulder Clay Surface	N		R. Philpott
42	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Setts exposed during strip	NW		R. Philpott
43	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails being lifted	N		R. Philpott
44	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails being lifted	N		R. Philpott
45	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails being lifted	N		R. Philpott
46	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails being lifted	N		R. Philpott
47	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails being lifted	N		R. Philpott

*Liverpool Digital. Watching Brief. Final Report.*

CAT	VIEW	FILM	NEG	SITE	AREA	CTXT	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DIR	NOTES	TAKEN BY
48	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails being lifted	S		R. Philpott
49	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Detail of rails showing electrical contacts			R. Philpott
50	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Detail of rails			R. Philpott
51	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails in situ	E		R. Philpott
52	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Detail of points			R. Philpott
53	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Detail of points			R. Philpott
54	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails in situ	S		R. Philpott
55	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Detail of rails showing electrical contacts			R. Philpott
56	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails in situ			R. Philpott
57	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rails in situ			R. Philpott
58	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-west corner of site Boulder Clay	SE		R. Philpott
59	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-west corner of site, excavation of setts	S		R. Philpott
60	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Profile across rails			R. Philpott
61	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Detail of setts after lifting			R. Philpott
62	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Lifting of rails	W		R. Philpott
63	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Lifting of rails	W		R. Philpott
64	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Lifting of rails	W		R. Philpott
65	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Lifting of rails	S		R. Philpott
66	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Lifting of rails	S		R. Philpott
67	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Rail tracks in situ on northern site boundary	W		R. Philpott
68	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	Removal of tarmac	SW		R. Philpott
69	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-West corner of site	S		R. Philpott
70	0	Digital		84			08/02/2005	North-West corner of site	S		R. Philpott
71	0	Digital		84			21/02/2005	North-West corner of site	S		M. Adams
72	0	Digital		84			21/02/2005	North-West corner of site, view from mound	SE		M. Adams
73	0	Digital		84			21/02/2005	North-West corner of site, view from mound	E		M. Adams



CAT	VIEW	FILM	NEG	SITE	AREA	CTXT	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DIR	NOTES	TAKEN BY
74	0	Digital		84			21/02/2005	North-West corner of site, view from mound	S		M. Adams

**Artefacts**

No finds were retained from this project